

Accountability System Reports For Selected Success Measures Small Community College Districts

Characteristics of Group

These small districts are located in the smaller cities and medium-sized towns of Texas. Their combined enrollment in fiscal year (FY) 2005-2006 was 48,538 students, an increase of 8.6 percent since FY 2000-2001. This enrollment includes credit and non-credit students. The fall 2006 for credit enrollment for these institutions was 17,638 a 22 percent increase over fall's 14,401 students.

They offer a wide range of educational opportunities, including Adult Basic Education for GED attainment, English as a Second Language courses, Continuing Education workforce programs, Certificate and Applied Associate degree workforce programs, and academic transfer courses and associate degrees for those students intending to transfer to a university. All community colleges are open enrollment, by state law.

Peer Group Membership

Clarendon College—Clarendon
Frank Phillips College—Borger
Galveston College—Galveston
Howard College District—Big Spring
Northeast Texas Community College—Mount Pleasant
Panola College—Carthage
Ranger College—Ranger
Vernon College—Vernon
Western Texas College—Snyder

Selected Success Measures for Group Focus

The measures chosen by this group were:

- Number 10: Percent of first-time, full-time credential-seeking undergraduates who have graduated or are still enrolled in Texas public and private higher education after six academic years by gender and ethnicity.
- Number 12: The number and percentage of awards by gender and ethnicity and by level of award.
- Number 14: Of public two-year colleges first-time summer/fall entering undergraduates who were not TSI exempted and took and failed the initial TSI test, the percent who earned A, B, or C, in a related general education core curriculum within three years if they tested above deviation or four years if they tested under deviation by subject areas (math, reading, and writing); compared with the percent of public two-year college first time summer/fall entering undergraduates who were TSI exempted or passed the initial TSI test, and earned

an A, B, or C in a related general education core curriculum course within one year.

Success Measures Data Analysis

Peer Group Summary Data:

- Between FY 2000 and 2006, the percentage of small community college students who transferred to a senior institution dropped slightly from 16.7 percent to 16.4 percent.
- During the same time period, the six-year graduation and persistence rate of first-time, full-time students rose by three points from 41 percent to 44 percent, in part reflecting the 36 percent increase in the number of associate degrees awarded.
- One year after graduation, 86 percent of the FY 2006 technical graduates were employed and not enrolled in higher education, compared with only 37 percent of academic graduates. About 56 percent of graduates were still enrolled in higher education or enrolled and employed, while only 9 percent of technical graduates were in this category.
- Of credential-seeking students entering small community colleges, 46 percent enrolled again at the same institution the following fall for both the fall 2000 and fall 2005 cohorts.
- Looking at the persistence rate the second fall shows that 20 percent of students in the fall 2004 cohort were still enrolled at the same institution compared with 16 percent of the fall 2000 cohort. Students in these cohorts who transferred to other institutions in Texas dropped from 29 percent for the fall 2000 to 21 percent for the fall 2004 cohort.
- Students in the fall 2003 cohort who took developmental reading education met their state obligations by fall 2005 at a rate of 43 percent; compared with 33 percent for those in math developmental education and 31 percent for writing developmental education.
- About 57% of fall 2003 students who were underprepared in math, reading, and/or writing returned in fall 2005, compared with 72 percent of prepared students.

Reasons for Selected Success Measures

- The group chose number 12; the number and percentage of awards by gender and ethnicity and by level of award because they believe it measures something “tangible that small community colleges do.
- The group was chosen because the members felt strongly that developmental education was an important mission of the group. The group felt that number 14 did a better job of measuring developmental education progress than number 22 and number 23.
- Number 13 (transfer rate) was not selected because the group felt that the 30 semester credit hour constraint for this measure reduced its value, since a lot of

students could attend their institutions without accumulating 30 semester credit hours.

- Number 16 (the number of degrees and certificates awarded in *Closing the Gap* critical field) was finally rejected because number 12 (graduation rates) is a wider measure and because small number of possible awards in some categories at small community colleges could produce misleading results.
- The group did not chose number 17 (number of nursing and allied health degrees and certificates awarded) because it was too restricted; some institutions have little or nothing in nursing, for example.
- Number 19 (percentage of students employed after 1 year of graduation) currently only measures employment in Texas at the present time. The THECB will be charging it in the coming years to include nationwide federal employment, including the USPS, and military enlistment.

Best Practices among the Group

- Northeast Texas is working with employers to establish their hiring needs. Western Texas noted that the job market is very good at the present due to the oil industry which leads to decreased enrollment.
- Panola has changed the course requirements in welding and petroleum to award more certificates and marketable skills awards, which encourages persistence and success. They explained that petroleum companies are paying their students during internships and then hiring them upon graduation.
- Western Texas offers scholarships (tuition and fees) to all students who graduate from high school in their county (about 200 graduates a year). Students must complete a FAFSA to be considered.
- Galveston offers free tuition and fees for two-years to high school graduates in their service area.
- Stephen F. Austin University has automatic scholarships of about \$1,000 to \$1,500 for core completers with a GPA of 3.0 or more, and about \$2,000 if the core completer has a GPA of 3.5 or more. Panola promotes this as a recruitment and persistence tool.
- Frank Phillips requires students to sit with an advisor after a certain amount of progress, to urge them to complete their core or field of study. Core completers at community colleges satisfy university core requirements, and they are more likely to persist and graduate at the university.
- Group members said a downside of online courses and registration is that they lose some opportunity to interact with students. Panola said it has helped to have nursing courses offered online, because it attracts firefighters and paramedics, for example, who find it difficult to attend face-to-face classes. Some 60 percent of those who started the online nursing curriculum took the final exam (100 percent of those passed); the 60 percent rate was actually better than the national face-to-face rate.
- Group members said that dual credit enrollment was generally increasing. “They were concerned that the success of dual credit students who attended their

- institutions is not reflected in the accountability system, because many of these students go to other institutions after they graduate from high school.
- Clarendon keeps their on-campus residential students engaged and busy the first two-weeks on campus. This program has helped improve persistence. The group agreed that the first two-weeks in higher education is a critical time as students adjust to new challenges.
 - Several members reported that athletes have study hall and that their coaches “hover” over them to ensure academic progress.
 - Frank Phillips requires a learning lab for academically borderline students. Clarendon has a mandatory developmental education lab instructed by developmental education instructors. Vernon mentioned breaking developmental education classes into two parts; to get students through the first part of this task before attempting the second half.
 - Members noted that students often have unrealistic ideas about how they are doing academically, especially if they are new and before they have had any graded assignments or tests. Western Texas’ instructors report early alert grades after the first few weeks of class. Another institution has four grades per semester, to provide earlier and more frequent feedback to students, Panola phones at-risk students instead of mailing letters that are more impersonal and easier to ignore.
 - These small community colleges do not generally have the resources to hire fulltime advisors. However, the smallness can be a plus, because advising can be more informal and personal. For example, a student may be your neighbor or the child of a friend. Advising is done by a mix of faculty and staff that may or may not have some training in advising.

Area of focus for the selected measures

The racial and ethnic composition of students entering institutions of higher education is changing rapidly. According to demographic projections, 40 percent of high school graduates in the United States will be nonwhite by the year 2010 compared to less than 25 percent in 1980. With these rapid shifts in the make-up of the college population this group has decided to take the selected measures and not only evaluate the overall results but look deeper into the results by ethnicity, gender, and race. These measures of accountability will help college administrators create campus environments where students can learn and become successful.